

BRIAN HIGGINS
26TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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TASK FORCE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3226

February 11, 2021

2459 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3306
(202) 226-0347 (FAX)

726 EXCHANGE STREET
SUITE 601
BUFFALO, NY 14210
(716) 852-3501
(716) 852-3929 (FAX)

800 MAIN STREET
SUITE 3C
NIAGARA FALLS, NY 14301
(716) 282-1274
(716) 282-2479 (FAX)
higgins.house.gov

The Honorable Peter Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Congratulations on your historic appointment to serve as Secretary of Transportation. I look forward to working together to improve the state of transportation and infrastructure in America. I write today to call attention to an issue of great importance to the flying public and to my home district in particular, the creation of a Pilot Records Database. As we approach the 12th anniversary of the tragic plane crash of Continental Flight 3407, it is imperative that we implement this database as soon as possible to achieve One Level of Safety in our skies.

On February 12th, 2009, Continental Flight 3407, operated by Colgan Air, crashed into a home in Clarence Center, New York, outside of Buffalo. All passengers and crew on board were killed as well as one person on the ground. The families of those lost turned tragedy into action in a heroic way, working with the Western New York Congressional Delegation to push for major flight safety reforms based on the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) findings about the crash. These reforms were passed in 'The Airline Safety and Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act of 2010.' This pivotal law enacted several aviation safety reforms, including enhanced pilot training requirements, pilot fatigue prevention, increased transparency in flight advertising, and the creation of a Pilot Records Database.

The Pilot Records Database is the final safety reform left to be implemented from the 2010 law. It would create a database accessible for commercial airlines to facilitate informed decisions during the pilot hiring process. The captain of Flight 3407 failed three practical tests known as "check rides" but only disclosed one to the regional airline that hired him. The database would include this information as well as other FAA records and qualifications, employment history, training, and status of national driver registry records. The Pilot Records Database first went into a beta test phase in December 2017 and currently only is available for voluntary use by hiring employers by hiring employers. The full, mandatory implementation of the Pilot Records Database is long overdue. We must finish the rulemaking process expeditiously to ensure the safest possible skies for the flying public, and bring over a decade's worth of work to conclusion.

Thank you for your consideration of this most important issue.

Sincerely,



BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress